



The President:

In recent weeks, rising violence and fighting have taken the lives of innocent civilians -- men, women and children. Heated rhetoric on both sides has raised the risk of war. So today, I want to speak directly to you:

The people of Sudan and South Sudan. In your lives, you've endured extraordinary hardship. You carry in your hearts the memory of family and friends you've lost. But in recent years, against great odds, you've made remarkable progress toward breaking the violent cycles of the past. Toward building a future of peace and greater prosperity.

Now all that progress is at risk of unraveling. So my message to you today is simple:

It doesn't have to be this way. Conflict is not inevitable. You still have a choice. You still have a chance to avoid being dragged back into war, which only leads to one place -- more suffering; more refugees; more death; more lost dreams for you and your children. We know what needs to happen -- the government of Sudan must stop its military actions, including aerial bombardments. It must give aid workers the access they need to save lives. And it must end its support for armed groups inside the South. Likewise, the government of South Sudan must end its support for armed

groups inside Sudan and it must cease its military actions across the border.

The presidents of Sudan and South Sudan must have the courage to return to the table and negotiate and resolve these issues peacefully. And all those who are fighting -- including in Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile -- must recognize that there is no military solution. The only way to achieve real and lasting security is to resolve your differences through negotiation. In times of tension, it's easy to forget that your future is shared. You will never be at peace if your neighbor feels threatened. You will never see development and progress if your neighbor refuses to be your partner in trade and commerce. It's easier to start wars than to end them. And yes, peace is hard. But the forces of history, which sometimes seem so large, are not beyond our control.

Your future belongs to you. It is in your hands. You have the power, the choice, to say what comes next -- whether your children will live in war or peace. The choice is yours and now is the time to choose peace. As I've said before, those who have the courage to walk the path of peace will not be alone. You will have a strong and steady partner in the United States of America.